

## A question for 2013: Who are the next heroes?

In the blink of an eye, 2012 is coming to a close and I am taking time to look back and marvel at all that has happened. WHERE did the time go? As I sit quietly in front of a computer screen, I reflect on how the year started out slow, with the insecurity of upcoming budget cuts as well as how the legislative session would progress. I also think of how the nation as a whole has been in the grip of a recession, and under pressure with a presidential election.

KCDHH has been busy with continuous requests for advocacy with hospitals, the legal system, prisons and educational systems. We've filled those requests, providing valuable information and resources, but as usual for this time of year I am left wondering if we have made a difference.

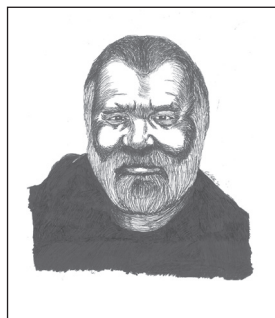
With the vast needs of Kentuckians, it is sometimes hard to know if our one small agency is making an impact. However, as I look on my desk today I know we are making a difference. The proof is in the stories and letters we receive from those we serve. As I look through a pile of letters sent to us, I see examples of our how our daily

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work has succeeded. There is one note from a 94-year-old woman, thanking us for her phone and telling us how she now feels independent and can understand her daughter for the first time in a long time. Another woman tells us how she appreciates the help we provided with her hospital stay.

We made headway in some areas in 2012, but we still have a long way to go toward some of our goals, especially within the educational system. I am still haunted by the mother who introduced me to her 7-year-old son. He signed his name to me and I smiled and signed my name to him. The mother's eyes began to tear up and she told me her son was diagnosed as autistic for the first six years of his life. He never had a formal language until they discovered he was deaf and he began to learn sign language. Now he is excelling! In my heart of hearts, I know we, as a whole community, failed this little boy! Out of our failure, though, shines a beacon of hope, embodied in this boy. It reminds us never to allow this to happen again, and so we strive to improve the educational system, including 0-3.

All we ask as a community is for equality, nothing more and nothing less. It's hard to do this alone, so we look for heroes in our lives. A hero is someone who stands up and dares to make a difference. KCDHH does not stand alone. We stand with



*Chuck Baird*



*Velda Taylor*



*Betty G. Miller*

*Sketches by Jennifer Harris*

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## Staff spotlight: Emily Kimbell

Emily Kimbell joined KCDHH as an Information Program Coordinator in June 2012 after working two years as a special education teacher aide in the Hickman County school system.

In her day-to-day job duties, Emily helps empower deaf and hard of hearing individuals, directing them to resources to help improve their access to effective communication in a variety of settings.

Since graduating from Gallaudet University in 2007, the Paducah native has worked with deaf and hard of hearing students in a deaf school as well as a public school setting. In



her spare time, Emily loves coaching and attending basketball games.

## Reflections on 2012

*Continued from front*

all of you, and we stand with our heroes who have made, and are making a difference! As most of you know, in 2012 we lost some of our community's heroes and leaders. Gone from us are Chuck Baird, Velda Taylor, Gene Waldrige, James Hester, Garland Best and Betty G. Miller, just to name a few.

The losses have left our community with a hole in our collective heart. Those individuals made a difference and it is what they did in their lifetime, their legacy, which will continue to make a difference in each of us. Every person reading this article has been touched directly or indirectly by one or more of these people. What an amazing legacy they leave, and we must carry it on!

I reflect on all this as 2012 comes to a close and I ask you.....are you a hero? Are you making a difference in someone's life? Who will take the place of these lost heroes and how do we fill the void they left and honor their legacy? Who will pick up the banner and say "follow me?" As we look toward 2013, I am making a promise to you, and to myself. KCDHH will continue to work to better the lives of all deaf and hard of hearing Kentuckians and we hope to be our community's hero.

Will you be ours as we work together?



# Award provides stage for deaf education

After the euphoria sank in that she had been named Kentucky's Elementary School Teacher of the Year, Heidi Givens of Daviess County realized that the award was not just about her.

"I'd been given the opportunity to have a soapbox, a stage to talk about deaf education," she said.

She and two other Kentucky teachers were honored at a Teacher of the Year awards ceremony Oct. 17 at the Capitol Rotunda in Frankfort.

Givens has taught deaf and hard of hearing students for 18 years, starting out in her native Massachusetts in 1995, then to Miami and eventually to western Kentucky in 2003.

From her perspective of having taught in two other states, Givens said Kentucky has come far in deaf and hard of hearing education.

"There has been a lot that has been improved since I've been here," she said. "We now have a Kentucky Educators for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Association (of which Givens is a founder) that was not in existence until 2011. We had our first conference this past summer. Resources for deaf and hard of hearing educators have also increased."

Still, she said the state has a long way to go.

"One of the issues is making sure people, whether it's the community at large, regular educators or even deaf and hard of hearing educators, know that deaf children have the right to an equitable, high-quality education and highly qualified teachers," she said. "There's still unfortunately the mentality of saying, 'Oh, they're deaf; they can't.'"

After 18 years of teaching, Givens said receiving the Elementary School Teacher of the Year award was a nice honor, but that she is equally thrilled when a student thanks her for teaching them or a parent gives her a hug for what she did for their child.

In addition to the distinction of being named Elementary School Teacher of the Year, Givens received a cash prize of \$3,000. She gave \$100 of the prize money to a class at Owensboro Middle School to do with as they wanted. In keeping with her example of paying it forward, the students decided not to put the money toward something for

themselves, but to reach out to their community.

"These fifth-grade students started brainstorming different fun games they could buy until one boy said, 'Let's use the money to help homeless kids!'" Givens wrote in a guest column she submitted to *Kentucky Teacher* magazine. "That was all it took; one student after another added to this great idea."

The students put together care package bags for children in foster care to have when they go into a foster home. They collected more than 200 stuffed animals in a drive at school and used Givens' \$100 donation to purchase 100 tote bags for the stuffed animals. The students even got local businesses involved, requesting donations of goods to add to the bags. The generosity spread from one class to another, and this holiday season children in foster care in Owensboro will receive a tote bag chock full of goodies.

From left, Gov. Steve Beshear, Kentucky Elementary School Teacher of the Year Heidi Givens and Ashland Inc. Chief Executive Officer James J. O'Brien at the Kentucky Teacher of the Year awards ceremony Oct. 17 at the state capitol building in Frankfort.



# Important role of interpreters

On Dec. 6 the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) Gallaudet University Alumni Association (GUAA) celebrated its 40th anniversary. During the celebration, two KSD students reminded us how Laurent Clerc and Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet worked together to provide communication to little “Alice” through French Sign Language (FSL). FSL eventually evolved into American Sign Language (ASL) as the two worked in America to provide education to deaf and hard of hearing children. ASL was soon used as a widespread means of communication between the deaf, hearing, and those individuals that served as interpreters. The history of the field of interpreting is one which grew out of need, love and the mutual understanding for the desire to bridge the communication gap between cultures.

Today we celebrate the professionalism of interpreters and recognize the need for them and the role they play, especially during times of crisis. This was most recently evident in the events surrounding Hurricane Sandy. As the news broadcasts showed, the governors of New Jersey and New York used interpreters as they conveyed important information during their televised briefings. What’s more, these interpreters were practically front and center, visible by television cameras, on the air for all to see. What a tremendous leap forward this gave our community as these televised briefings were both captioned and interpreted, allowing access to everyone watching. Many Americans became fascinated with the fluid motions of an interpreter’s hands and the animated expressions on their faces, qualities that are fairly normal to



Photo courtesy of the New York City Mayor's Office

*Lydia Callas, left, interprets for New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg during one of several briefings in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. Callas and other interpreters became well-known fixtures during those frequent briefings, attracting the attention of the news media and comedy writers across the country.*

most of us. But, imagine that you are seeing an ASL interpreter for the first time in your life. Wouldn't you find it interesting? Wouldn't it inspire you to educate yourself more on deaf and hard of hearing culture?

For weeks after the hurricane we heard about the devastated community as it was discussed on national news, but the visibility of interpreters at these briefings led to several stories by print and broadcast media outlets, most specifically focusing on Lydia Callas, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's interpreter for the Hurricane Sandy briefings.

As often happens, art imitates life, and in recovery, laughter is often the best medicine. A little levity can relieve tension during a tragic situation. The interpreters who had made national news came to the attention of comedy writers for shows like Saturday Night Live (SNL).

A specific sketch on SNL in the wake of Hurricane Sandy lampooned the role of interpreters at those briefings, and the deaf community and interpreters themselves expressed outrage. Let us pause though and consider how many times the interpreting profession has enjoyed the national spotlight, not only in the news, but also on a sketch comedy show with a longstanding tradition of satire. Our community should look at the attention and focus that was brought to ASL as a vital mode of communication. We should remember that “if you make it to SNL, you have truly ARRIVED!” It is up to us to educate the community regarding the importance of having an interpreter, and yet be able to laugh when SNL shows the interpreter in a spoof. In its history of more than three decades, SNL has spoofed diversity indiscriminately. It is

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# KSD hosts Gallaudet president, first lady

Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) on Dec. 6 hosted Gallaudet University President Alan Hurwitz and the university's First Lady Vicki Hurwitz at a banquet celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Kentucky Chapter of the Gallaudet University Alumni Association.

In addition to honoring Kentucky's graduates of Gallaudet, the banquet also celebrated the partnership between Gallaudet and KSD in improving deaf education at the Danville school.

On his tour of KSD and Centre College, President Hurwitz learned how Centre, in 1824, sent John A. Jacobs to the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Conn. in order to learn teaching methods from Laurent Clerc and Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and bring those practices back to KSD. Upon his return to Danville, Jacobs was appointed principal of KSD and later was made superintendent of the school



*From left, KCDHH Executive Director Virginia L. Moore and staff members Emily Kimbell and Blake Noland met Gallaudet University First Lady Vicki Hurwitz and President Alan Hurwitz Dec. 6 at a reception at Kentucky School for the Deaf for the Kentucky Chapter of the Gallaudet University Alumni Association.*

as he continued his advocacy for deaf education.

Current KSD Principal Rodney Buis and Joe Buschmann of the Kentucky Chapter of Gallaudet University Alumni gave President Hurwitz an engraved Kentucky Derby silver mint julep cup and a framed lithograph of Jacobs Hall. The Hurwitzes were also given

## Danville's Key to the City

Paul Smiley, a retired longtime KSD athletics director and recently elected city commissioner, presented the key. Smiley represented Danville Mayor Bernie Hunstad, conveying a message to the president and first lady from Mayor Hunstad. The mayor wrote that the key to the city "symbolizes the outstanding civic contributions of Gallaudet University, which have directly affected Danville and our local community."

President and Mrs. Hurwitz each gave presentations of their own. The president discussed the shared history of Clerc and Gallaudet and Mrs. Hurwitz talked about her discovery upon moving into House One on the Gallaudet campus of the rich history of previous Gallaudet First Ladies. She also shared her passion for deaf women studies.

## Sandy brought interpreting profession into spotlight

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through laughter that we sometimes see the importance of acceptance of diversity. Let's laugh and take the opportunity to educate those who didn't know what ASL was before that episode aired!

As deaf and hard of hearing Kentuckians and family members and friends, we must promote the need for interpreters in our state, especially during emergencies. We must demand that they be as visible to our viewing audience as the interpreters in New York and New Jersey were visible to theirs. Our state leaders must be advised and understand our community's need to be aware of the information being dispersed during an emergency, just as New York and New Jersey included the deaf and hard of hearing community!

Partnerships within our community are also very much

needed. As members of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) we strive to improve our profession and the relationships we have forged. RID recently made a public stand to acknowledge the deaf community and the importance of our partnerships by hiring its first deaf chief executive officer, Shane Feldman. Feldman left an important position with the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), which will be a great loss to NAD. His role with RID, though, is a great benefit to the deaf community as a whole. With Mr. Feldman's guidance, interpreters and those in the community they serve, can work as a team and become better leaders in everything we strive to accomplish.



**Shane Feldman**



**KCDHH**

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*Happy Holidays  
from all of us at KCDHH!*

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